

We Claim:

1. A terminal block including means for connecting a customer with any of a plurality of telecommunications service providers, wherein the customer's service provider is changed without inserting or removing wires from the terminal block.

2. A terminal block for connecting a customer with any of a plurality of telecommunications service providers, the block including:
a first connection mechanism which, when not disabled, connects a customer to a first service provider

a second connection mechanism which, when not disabled, connects the customer to a second service provider; and

a disabling mechanism for disabling either the first connection mechanism or the second connection mechanism.

3. The terminal block of claim 2 wherein the first and second connection mechanisms each include normally-closed contacts, and the disabling mechanism includes one or more insulating plugs insertable into at least one of the normally-closed contacts, so as to disable the first connection mechanism or the second connection mechanism or both the first and the second connection mechanisms.

4. A terminal block for connecting a customer with any of a plurality of telecommunications service providers, including:

a plurality of first connection mechanisms and a plurality of second connection mechanisms;

each first connection mechanism including a first normally-closed contact in series between a first terminal and a second terminal, and a second normally-closed

contact in series between a third terminal and a fourth terminal;

each second connection mechanism including a first normally-closed contact in series between a first terminal and a second terminal, and a second normally-closed contact in series between a third terminal and a fourth terminal.

5. The terminal block of claim 4 wherein each of respective first connection mechanisms is associated with a corresponding second connection mechanism such that the second terminal of a respective first connection mechanism is electrically connected to the first terminal of a corresponding second connection mechanism, and the fourth terminal of a respective first connection mechanism is electrically connected to the third terminal of a corresponding second connection mechanism.

6. The terminal block of claim 5 further including a disabling mechanism in the form of removable insulating plugs which are insertable into any of the normally-closed contacts such that, upon insertion, electrical continuity between the normally-closed contacts is broken.

7. The terminal block of claim 6 wherein each of respective pairs of first and third terminals of first connection mechanisms are connected to corresponding incoming twisted-pair telephone lines from a first telecommunications service provider, and each of respective pairs of second and fourth terminals of second connection mechanisms are connected to corresponding incoming twisted-pair telephone lines from a second telecommunications service provider.

8. The terminal block of claim 7 wherein each of respective pairs of second and fourth terminals of first connection mechanisms and/or each of respective pairs of first and third terminals of second connection mechanisms are electrically

connected to corresponding outgoing twisted-pair telephone lines.

9. The terminal block of claim 8 wherein the outgoing twisted-pair telephone lines are routed to a customer premises.

10. The terminal block of claim 8 wherein the outgoing twisted-pair telephone lines are routed to a customer premises through ancillary equipment.

11. The terminal block of claim 10 wherein the ancillary equipment includes a switching mechanism for providing a local loop to the customer premises.

12. The terminal block of claim 8 wherein one or more removable insulating plugs are inserted into the first and second normally-closed contacts so as to connect a customer with the second telecommunications service provider, or into the third and fourth normally-closed contacts so as to connect the customer with the first telecommunications service provider.

13. The terminal block of claim 7 wherein each of a plurality of first and second connection mechanisms is associated with a corresponding set of third and fourth connection mechanisms.

14. The terminal block of claim 13 wherein each third connection mechanism includes a first normally-closed contact in series between a first terminal and a second terminal, and a second normally-closed contact in series between a third terminal and a fourth terminal, and each fourth connection mechanism includes a first normally-closed contact in series between a first terminal and a

second terminal, and a second normally-closed contact in series between a third terminal and a fourth terminal.

15. The terminal block of claim 14 wherein each respective third connection mechanism is associated with a corresponding fourth connection mechanism such that the second terminal of a respective third connection mechanism is electrically connected to the first terminal of a corresponding fourth connection mechanism, and the fourth terminal of a respective third connection mechanism is electrically connected to the third terminal of a corresponding fourth connection mechanism.

16. The terminal block of claim 15 wherein each of respective pairs of first and third terminals of third connection mechanisms are connected to corresponding outgoing twisted-pair telephone lines routed to a customer premises.

17. The terminal block of claim 15 wherein each of respective pairs of second and fourth terminals of fourth connection mechanisms are connected to corresponding outgoing twisted-pair telephone lines routed to a customer premises.

18. The terminal block of claim 16 wherein each of respective pairs of second and fourth terminals of first connection mechanisms are connected to corresponding input terminals of an ancillary switching device including a mechanism for providing local loops on the outgoing twisted-wire pair telephone lines.

19. The terminal block of claim 17 wherein each of respective pairs of second and fourth terminals of first connection mechanisms are connected to corresponding input terminals of an ancillary switching device including a

mechanism for providing local loops on the outgoing twisted-wire pair telephone lines.

20. The terminal block of claim 18 wherein each of respective pairs of second and fourth terminals of third connection mechanisms are connected to corresponding output terminals of the ancillary switching device.

21. The terminal block of claim 19 wherein each of respective pairs of second and fourth terminals of third connection mechanisms are connected to corresponding output terminals of the ancillary switching device.

22. The terminal block of claim 15 wherein each of respective pairs of first and third terminals of third connection mechanisms are connected to corresponding outgoing twisted-pair telephone lines routed to a customer premises, and each of respective pairs of second and fourth terminals of fourth connection mechanisms are connected to corresponding outgoing twisted-pair telephone lines routed to a customer premises.

23. The terminal block of claim 22 wherein a disabling mechanism disables the first connection mechanism and the associated third connection mechanism to provide access to the second service provider, or disables the second connection mechanism and the associated fourth connection mechanism to provide access to the first service provider.

24. The terminal block of claim 23 wherein the disabling mechanism includes one or more removable insulating plugs which are insertable into any of the normally-closed contacts such that, upon insertion, electrical continuity between the normally-closed contacts is broken.